

**REPORT**  
**Relative to the Inquiry into the**  
**POSSIBILITIES and MEANS of**  
**RECONCILIATION**  
**between the various**  
**Masonic Powers of the world**

Presented to the International Masonic Association  
In the name of the Grand Orient of France  
by  
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**POSSIBILITIES and MEANS of RECONCILIATION**  
**between the various Masonic Powers of the world**

REPORT of Brother ARTHUR GROUSSIER, of the Grand Orient of France, on the possibility and means of reconciliation between the various regular Masonic Powers of the world. Presented to the International Masonic Association in the name of the Grand Orient of France.

**NECESSITY OF RAPPROCHEMENT**

The Grand Orient of France believes that reconciliation between the various Masonic bodies is a pressing necessity if Freemasonry wishes to live and work freely for the triumph of its Ideal. The terrible conflict from 1914 to 1918 saw nations cutting each others' throats for the supremacy of their own interests or of their own ideologies and has unchained a disrupting agitation not only among the European nations, but in all the civilized world, and the fatal consequences are aggravated by the pernicious germs of future conflicts.

The lack of balance has raged in all domains, political, economic, and moral; and far from calming down, it is being aggravated and the

races are falling backward and the nations are being divided. Harmony in the interior as well as peace on the exterior are both menaced. Human beings may again rush on each other and with the most terrible and bloody horrors engulf and bury the civilization and culture which our fathers have so painfully created, and of which we are so justly proud.

In circumstances so grave, has Masonry done, or is it doing its Duty? Does it not claim to be a great Moral Power? But at what moment has it spoken? When has it acted ?

Profoundly divided, it was not able to act with any efficiency, and it has been, and is the victim of its own inaction. Masonry has allowed blow after blow to be struck against Liberty, while, more than any other organization, it is impregnated with the spirit of Liberty.

It was Freemasonry that was first to be brutally attacked by the dictators. In Europe nearly one half of the Masonic powers have already succumbed. Others are again menaced. Perhaps certain people will think that they have only paid for their faults. We do not think so. We shall not recount the painful story of the disappeared Jurisdictions, nor the Calvary or assassinations of great Masons, esteemed and honored' by their fellow-citizens, and whom we venerate as enlightened Masters. Let us speak of the Grand Lodge of Vienna. What was its sin ? Had it done any act which anyone could reproach ? Did it figure among the Masonic Powers which they accuse of mixing in the political life ? Certainly not. It had only twenty years of existence, but it ranked high among its elders. Its Masonic relations were numerous. It exchanged guarantees of friendship with the United Grand Lodge of England, which at a difficult moment manifested toward it an active sympathy. It also exchanged them with the Grand Orient of France. It understood the necessity of union among all the symbolic bodies. Are we going to let the Masonic Light be extinguished at the moment when the nations have such pressing need of it ? Let us unite if we wish the flaming star to shine and the torch which has been transmitted to us by our elders to enlighten men of good-will on the saving road of Brotherly Love.

## **THE FORM OF RAPPROCHEMEINT**

The most ancient form of permanent rapprochement between masonic Powers has been that of recognition, requiring the exchange of guarantees of friendship. Truly it is not to be disdained. It has

rendered great services in the past and can render them again in some way animated by more continued relations among the dignitaries of the Powers; if neighbor Masonic Powers do not recognize each other, if two Powers which exchange guarantees of friendship with a third have no relations among themselves, the network of friendship which extends over Universal Masonry can not form a solid tissue, which homogeneity alone can render efficient.

The first exchange of guarantees of friendship of, which we, find any trace was 160 years ago. In 1779 the Grand Orient of Holland, having charged a deputy to be its representative to the Grand Orient of France, the latter in its turn designated a deputy to this Masonic Power having analogous powers.

It was necessary to wait 125 years before we find other permanent forms of international rapprochement

1. Bureau of Masonic Relations and Information.
2. Association of Masonic Powers.
3. League of Freemasons.

There were likewise forms of rapprochement that were non-permanent : International demonstrations and Conventions. Then followed the conventions that took place at Paris in 1889, at Antwerp in 1894, at the Hague in 1896, at Paris in 1900 and at Geneva in 1902. On January 1, 1903 the Swiss Grand Lodge Alpina opened an International Bureau of Masonic Relations.

Its purpose was to facilitate relations among the adhering Masonic Powers without in any way infringing on their independence or their sovereignty, and to transmit to them information interesting to Freemasonry, and to publish a Bulletin in the different languages and an Annual of Universal Masonry.

Under the skilful management of Brother Edward Quartier-La-Tente, Grand Master of Grand Lodge Alpina, and thanks to his unwearying devotion, the Bureau prospered. It comprised 29 Masonic Powers in 1918. In 1921 there were 24. Let us note that the German Grand Lodges of Bayreuth, of Frankfort, and the Independent Lodges of Leipzig did not figure among them at the last date. Neither of the lists comprised any Grand Lodge of the United States or any British or Scandinavian Grand Lodges.

The very flexible organization of this Bureau permitted it to receive subscriptions and' gifts from Lodges or from Masons, giving such the right to receive the Bulletins, which were published in French, German and English; several numbers were also printed in Spanish and Italian.. Without having adhered to it, some American Grand Lodges sent gifts to the Bureau : namely the Grand Lodges of New York, Mass., Maryland, North Dakota, South Carolina, and Utah, as well as the Canadian Grand Lodge of Manitoba.

It was at the Convention convoked by the Swiss Grand Lodge Alpina at Geneva, in October, 1921, that the International Masonic Association was founded, which replaced the Bureau of which we have just spoken.

In 1921 it was supported by 17 Grand Lodges, but at the Convention in 1923 it had 26. Among those who participated in the 1923 Convention was the Grand Lodge of New York, which, however, did not maintain its adhesion. Today, in spite of the vacancies caused by the forced dissolution of 7 European Masonic Powers, the International Masonic Association comprises 30 Masonic Powers in Europe, Central and South America.

The purpose of the Association is not very different from that of the Bureau to which it succeeded : viz., to maintain and develop relations existing between the Masonic Powers, and to create new ones, but it has created a Consultative Committee which permits the representatives of adhering Powers to know each other better and to gain a more profound understanding of the peculiar conditions of their respective Jurisdictions.

At its first Congress, in 1921, the Association had believed that it might be able to adopt a Declaration of Principles, which it was obliged to consider as non-obligatory at its following meeting in 1923. Perhaps it wished to go too fast. But one should consider that, while respecting the absolute autonomy of the adhering Masonic Powers, the Association has studied a number of regulations which, while remaining optional, have authority in a large part of the Masonic world.

Finally, in 1913, there was founded an International League of Freemasons, which was dissolved in 1914 and reconstructed in 1923, at Basel, Switzerland, under the Presidency of Brother F. Uhlmann, This League has far its purpose the bringing together of all individual Masons of all Rites and countries and languages, without interfering in

the interior affairs of Masonic Powers and without dealing with questions of ritual.

We do not believe we should speak here of the demonstrations of French and German Masons, of which the first took place in 1907, at Schlucht; nor of the special Conventions which were held in the 18th century, or of the Conventions which took place at the end of the 19th century, and which can give us no indication of a solution to the question under consideration. One can, nevertheless, point to the method of rapprochement of the Supreme Councils of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite constituted in a Federation to maintain the unity of the Rite by reciprocal affiliation of the Councils while guaranteeing the independence of each of them. By virtue of the Treaty of Lausanne of 1875, these Supreme Councils assemble only in Convention meeting at regular intervals. Let us remark that this mode of organization, less centralized than that of the I. A. M., rest on the unity of the Rite, which cannot be the case with the Symbolic Grand Lodges.

Finally, a form of rapprochement has been extolled that is more simple. It would consist of the conference of the Chiefs of the Order.

Each one of the forms of rapprochement we have mentioned has its advantages and also its inconveniences; one can choose between a simple Bureau of information and an association of Masonic Powers; one can give to this grouping an organization more or less flexible; but there is no opposition between a rapprochement of Masonic bodies by the representative officers, and a rapprochement, basically speaking, of simple Masons under the reserve that this league may have as its unique purpose to provide for meetings of Masons of different tongues and nations, and, by its statutes, can make no decisions binding on Freemasonry.

Besides the form of organization to be determined, the place of its meetings is very important. Switzerland is both the territorial center of Europe and also a center from the standpoint of ritual. But Geneva or Basel are far from the Americas, and although the Grand' Lodges of South America have rallied to the International Masonic Association, can one think that the Grand Lodges of the United States or of Canada would accept a seat so far off from them, especially if a large number of them adhered to a common organization ? It might without doubt be possible to foresee the sections which would agree to a rapprochement; Europe, America, etc., but the seat of a central organization would be difficult to determine.

The Grand Orient of France would rally to any form of rapprochement or any meeting place that will meet with the most general acceptance.

The Masonic Powers which have affiliated with the various organizations attempting to bring about rapprochement have been nearly identical, but none have been able to receive or retain the adhesion of a Scandinavian or British Grand Lodge, or one from the United States of America. Why the Anglo Saxon Masonic Powers have remained aloof from these organizations appears to us complex, and perhaps a little different; but it seems that these Powers do not believe they ought to accept bands closer or more intimate than those which result from recognition, evidenced by the exchange of guarantees of friendship. If it was thus, all propositions that we would be able to make would have no useful consequence towards bringing about the universality of Masonry.

Under these conditions is it for us to seek new forms of rapprochement ? Would it rather be for those non-adhering Powers to the International Masonic Association to determine what would be the mode of more intimate union that would be acceptable to them ?

We believe, however, that any rapprochement which would be based only on simple recognition would be without much interest if the officials of these powers never or rarely met, and if this bond was not reinforced by a reciprocal and constant penetration of Masons in the Lodges of the friendly Powers.

## **CONDITIONS OF RAPPROCHEMENT**

The most important question to examine is not so much the form of rapprochement, as that of the conditions exacted; by certain jurisdictions, not even to a closer rapprochement, but to simple recognition. It is a question of regularity that is raised. Freemasonry possesses a triple character : initiative (initiatic, to coin a word, Fr. 'initiatique'), symbolic and ritualistic; but no Masonic Power works according to the ancient rituals, nor has preserved the initiation-forms of our origins; there cannot be uniformity in these matters; different Rites are practiced and no one can think of making them uniform, or of imposing his own Rite.

We do not know the text of the ritual, or rituals, that were in use at the time when modern Freemasonry was founded at London, in 1717.

What documents can one invoke in order to fix the conditions of Masonic regularity ?

The only official document that has been preserved from that time, at which speculative Freemasonry succeeded operative Freemasonry, is entitled << Constitutions of the Free Masons, containing the history, the charges, regulations, etc. of this most ancient and worshipful Fraternity, for the use of the Lodges ».

The general regulations which figure in these << Constitutions » of the Grand Lodge of London have often been modified by the United Grand Lodge of England, as improvements to these rules appeared necessary to its best interests. Each Masonic Power has adopted the rules which appeared best suited to its development and no difficulty can arise from this difference.

The essential part of the « Constitutions » of Anderson, is that concerning i The Charges of a Free-Mason, extracted from the ancient records of Lodges beyond sea, and of those in England, Scotland, and Ireland, for the use of the Lodges in London to be read at the making of New Brethren, or when the Master shall order it... »

These a Charges » are the true charter of speculative or modern Freemasonry. It is to them we must refer in order to know the true spirit of the founders of Freemasonry.

Certain persons pretend to complete these « Charges » by other Landmarks. Without doubt the article 39 of the general regulations of 1723 determines that « Every Annual Grand Lodge has an inherent Power and Authority to make new regulations, or to alter these, for the real benefit of this ancient Fraternity; provided always that the old Landmarks be carefully preserved. » By virtue of this disposition the Charges ought to be completed by the essential rules of the Fraternity.

Masonic writers have been able to give a list of them, but they are not found in agreement on the number nor on the text of these Landmarks.

So we consider it to be absolutely impossible under an arbitrary penalty to invoke as conditions of regularity these « Landmarks » of which no verified text has been presented nor guaranteed as exact by any recognized authority. In our opinion, only the document of the Charges of 1723 can be invoked universally in order to decide regularity.

Ought we not to consider the evolution which the Masonic Powers have experienced during two centuries, as the result of the difference of language, of religion, of history, of law and of the customs of the races which have founded and developed them?

In 1911 Brother Quartier-La-Tente distinguished three groups in Universal Masonry, distinct not from point of view of principles, but in that which concerns their activity and their tendencies. These groups are, he wrote : c Anglo-Saxon Masonry, Germanic Masonry and Latin Masonry. Anglo-Saxon Masonry is more ritualistic and charitable, Germanic Masonry is rather philosophic and traditional, Latin Masonry is very active, very humanitarian and very valiant for the social good. All three work for the good of humanity; all three merit equally respect and esteem, and one may ask to what degree of wellbeing humanity would reach if a real and sincere brotherhood had always presided over the relations of these Groups among themselves. » And' this great Swiss Mason ended by saying : « What would Society have become if Masonry had not met on its road the most redoubtable enemy of Humanity, which has so long oppressed men's consciences and arrested the progress of light; that enemy which it must vanquish some day, as well in Spain as elsewhere, and which is named clericalism, -this clericalism which has done and is still doing so much evil, not only to Masonry but to the religion which it pretends to defend.

In 1929 the United Grand Lodge of England enunciated eight fundamental principles for the recognition of Grand Lodges. It is evidently the absolute right of this Masonic Power to propose certain conditions to those Grand Lodges which solicit its friendship; but is has not, that we know, the power to fix principles of regularity, applying to Universal Masonry, and as it seems that certain Powers may be disposed to generalize these conditions, we may be permitted to examine certain questions which proceed directly or indirectly from the principles decreed by this Grand Lodge.

The essential points upon which our disagreement bears are seen in conditions 2, 3 and 6, and concern the Book of the Sacred Law; the revelation from On High, and the belief in the G. A. O. T. U. and in his revealed will; or more simply, the Bible and Dogma.

## **THE BIBLE**

In principles 3 and 6 the United Grand Lodge of England does not prescribe expressly the presence of the Bible during the length of the Masonic work, but that of the Book of the Sacred Law. Without doubt this Masonic Power admits that the Lodges that are not composed of Christians can replace the Bible by the sacred book of the religion to which their members belong; the Koran for the Musulman, the Vedas for the Hindus, but it appears to admit that the Bible ought to be the Book of the Sacred Law for European Masonry. In all cases it is the Bible that is spoken of to us French Masons, as if it ought to be the Book of our Law. A first question is then: By virtue of what ancient Charge is the presence of the Bible required ? What is the Old Landmark that prescribes it ? However far one goes back into the past, no trace is to be found of this usage.

It will be conceded that the first fraternities of Operative Masons that were formed in the Middle Ages for the construction of the cathedrals were composed exclusively of Catholics. Besides, not only did the Bible not figure in the liturgy of the Apostolic and Roman Catholic church, but the Councils of Toulouse and of Tarragon had forbidden their faithful the use of its translation into the vulgar tongue. The Papacy became more severe in the 16th century, at the appearance of the Reformation.

If we consult the English manuscripts relating the « Old Charges » of the operative Masons, preserved at the British Museum, whether it be the Regius Manuscript, or the Cooke, or William Watson, or Tew manuscripts, we shall find that in none of the charges which are contained therein is the Bible cited.

It appears even, whatever may have been the confession to which the English operative Masons of the 16th and 17th century belonged, that since the ordinances which governed the guild of carpenters of Norwich towards the end of the 14th century down to the c Old Charges 3, still in use at the beginning of the 18th century, the recital of the religious duties which were prescribed there had preserved the Catholic mark.

The Cooke Manuscript, which is probably the source from which Anderson borrowed, specifies that « it behoveth them first principally to (love) God and His Holy Church and all the Hallows ». The Watson and Tew Manuscripts (1680) , as well as the Roberts edition (1722) , recommend not to allow oneself to be led away into heresy or schism. On the other hand the various parts of the Constitutions of Anderson bear no trace of the Bible or any other sacred book.

Let us remark that the religious duties, which are prescribed by the Manuscripts that we have just referred to, have not preserved any confessional form; they resolve themselves, in the Charges, into high moral duty : cc to be men of good-will 3, and to cultivate brotherly love which binds together the members of the Brotherhood.

The work of Anderson marks a new orientation of minds. Besides, it is known that at its origin the Grand Lodge of England did not place the Bible on the altar, and it was not until 1760 that it considered' it as a Great Light. We see no impropriety in the Grand Lodges making profanes take their obligations on the Bible at the time of their initiation. This rite may be recommended in the name of Protestantism, but it cannot be required, legitimately, of us by virtue of the « Old Landmark » of Masonry.

The Grand Orient of France can remember that it descends directly from the first Grand Lodge of France, which had British Masons among its founders. For two centuries it has never considered the Bible as a Great Light, and there is no trace that at any moment in that time the Work in the Lodge was performed in the presence of the Bible, or even of the Gospels. However old may be the rituals that we have preserved, it is to be noted that the candidates have always taken their obligation on the Constitution and on the sword.

To take the sacred book of one of the religions as the principal light makes the realization of unity in this matter impossible, since men are divided into numerous cults differing one from another. Besides it places the initiate of Catholic origin in a particularly delicate situation. One seems to forget that the Holy See has launched its thunders against the Freemasons. While the church of France remained Gallican, and the Bulls of Popes Clement XII and Benedict XIV were not registered by Parliament, the priests and monks were able to participate in Masonic work without losing their quality of Catholics. But the situation changed from the time of the Concordat of the year IX and above all in the period following 1815, when occurred the progressive elimination of Gallicanism from the Church of France which became ultramontane. The excommunication which struck Freemasons after 1738 and which was confirmed by the Papacy on numerous occasions, became applicable to the Catholics of France. It follows that every Catholic who became a Freemason, no longer remained a communicant of the Apostolic Roman Catholic Church. He cannot honestly claim a religion or a communion from which a decree of the infallible head has cut him off.

How can we ask him to take his obligation on the Sacred Book of a Church which rejected him from its bosom, at the same instant when in our temples we would make him place his hand upon this book. What would be the religious or moral value of an obligation thus taken? Should it be necessary for the candidate to attach himself to another confession, by borrowing from it the Book of its Sacred Law? Let us not forget that the Catholic does not have the same religious conceptions as the Protestants ; for the latter the Bible is a book, from which he is accustomed from infancy to draw instruction for his belief, while the simple faithful of the Catholic church are ignorant of the Old Testament as regards its text, and only know the Scripture according to the dogmatic interpretation which the ecclesiastic authority can alone teach him.

The Papacy excludes him because he has become a Freemason; he has then no bond with the Roman church and its instruction; in these conditions only can one admit that he is attached exclusively to Freemasonry, which he places above any confession and obeys simply the moral law, which Anderson has defined in his beautiful formula, « to be good men and true, or men of honor and honesty 3,? Will he not be able to take as the Book of his Law that of the Charges published by the Grand Lodge of England, in 1723, and which has fixed for him, as for all Freemasons, the moral rules which he ought to obey ? Will it be because he prefers this Masonic Book, which obliges us all, to one of the Sacred Books which obliges only the believers of a particular confession that you, Freemasons, his Brothers, will refuse to recognize him?

The Charges of Anderson of 1723 are the sole text to which all Masonic Bodies can be universally attached. This valuable document was written in the English language at the commencement of the 18th century with the sense the words then had; certainly it was impregnated with the spiritual conceptions which were universally admitted at that time, but for those who wish to penetrate its profound meaning it shows a loftiness of view remarkable for that epoch. It is animated with a spirit of proportion and a great spirit of toleration which we ought always to imitate; it expresses the noble aspirations and it exalts Brotherhood in such admirable passages that we can never meditate on them too much.

In spite of the modifications proposed by Anderson in 1738, the Grand' Lodge of England preserved the Charge of 1723 until it was modified in 1815. All the other Masonic Powers, on their part, have drawn up Constitutions or Charges which are personal to them. This is the better

understood because of the evolution of ideas during the past two centuries. Thought, which the Reformation had begun to emancipate, has continued to free itself from dogmas, thanks to the marvelous development of Science and the improvement of its method's. Is this to say that the Grand Orient of France rejects the Charges of 1723? By no means. They are far from being animated by a .narrow dogmatism and we consider them as a venerable and remarkable document from our past. We affirm their origin and remain faithful to them and to more fully reaffirm it the Council of the Order of the Grand Orient of France has decided that at the time of their initiation the candidates shall take their obligations on the Constitutions of the Order to which shall be joined the Charges of Anderson in the original wording of 1723, such as the most ancient French Lodge received from the Grand Lodge of England. This Book of the Law as well as the Square and Compass ought to rest upon the Sword, the emblem of the free condition of the first Freemasons.

## **DOGMA**

When the Grand Lodge of England specifies in its third fundamental principle for the recognition of Grand Lodges that a the Book of the Sacred Law expresses the revelation from on High » it appears to forget that among the Buddhists, especially since the coming of the Mahayana, the Law is not established by authority, nor by revelation, but by Understanding; and that, consequently, dogma and revelation cannot legitimately be imposed in the North of India nor in the countries of the extreme East. It likewise disregards the fact that the Christian societies, representing the liberal Protestantism, Unitarians, Remonstrants, Socinians, have as a formal principle, freedom of thought placed above all exterior authority, including the Holy Scriptures itself ; and that they have rejected all dogmas which have appeared to them as incomprehensible. Does the United Grand Lodge of England pretend that Buddhists and liberal Christians cannot be admitted to Freemasonry ?

By its second principle « that belief in the Grand Architect of the Universe, and in His revealed will shall be an essential condition for the admission of members », the United Grand Lodge of England does not content itself by restoring a symbol, but there again, by belief in the revealed will, it affirms a dogma. It is not only a spiritual sense that it gives to the symbol but it applies to it a confessional sense.

On the other hand, the Charges that it adopted in 1723 declared that in ancient times Masons were required to be of the religion of the country in which they lived, but now it is & thought more expedient only to oblige them to that religion in which all men agree... that is, to be good men and true, or men of honor and honesty » ; and Anderson has specified it forcibly by saying, « leaving their particular opinions to themselves ».

Have we not the right to think, in referring to this text, that if the dogma of revelation can be made the object of a personal belief, the fact of imposing it on all Masons is formally contrary to the letter and spirit of the « Old Charges » of 1723 ?

## **LIBERTY OF THOUGHT**

By its of 1929, it approaches the Masonry of the Reformation, not in its liberalism, but in its orthodoxy proceeding from the teachings of Luther and Calvin. The Grand Orient of France has followed a different road. Created two centuries ago with the spirit of the Constitutions of 1723, it endeavored to re-attach itself to Catholicism in 1849; then it separated itself from it in 1877 in, order to go beyond liberal Protestantism and to place itself on the terrain of liberty of thought. Should not the fluctuations which the thoughts and, beliefs of English and French Masons have undergone incite them to use more toleration for one another, and, if they had known how to preserve and increase their fraternal relations, have we not reason to think that their differences would have been less pronounced ?

Let us not forget that since the 18th century the. Grand Orient of France, under the influence of the philosophy of that period, had become very liberal, and that by the side of the ecclesiastics who remained attached to the Gallican Church, it welcomed all the tendencies, both spiritual and rationalistic. But, in 1849, breaking with its past, it introduced into its Constitution the dogmatic formula of « belief in God and in the immortality of the soul >>. No Masonic authority demanded' it. When 28 years afterwards, September 13, 1877, it effaced this affirmation from the text of its Constitution, some thought to see in this a formal prohibition of the glorification of the G. A. O. T. U., which was inexact. They did not understand or did not wish to understand that by this decision the Grand Orient of France simply returned to its steadfast tradition of respect, not only for the rites and beliefs, but likewise for all philosophical conceptions.

In order to be convinced of this, it suffices to refer to the following document : In a letter from the Council of the Order, addressed to the Guarantee of Friendship of the Grand Orient of France, associated with the Frond Lodge of Ireland, which had renounced its functions by reason of this decision which had just been made, Brother Saint-Jean wrote : « Let it suffice me to affirm to you that in modifying one article of its Statutes, the Grand Orient of France is not to be understood as making a profession of atheism, nor of materialism, as some would seem to believe. Nothing is changed, neither in the principles, nor in the practices of Masonry. French Masonry remains that which it always has been, a Masonry fraternal and tolerant. Respecting the religious faith and the political convictions of its adepts, it leaves to each, in these delicate questions, the full liberty of his conscience. » >> Let us remark that the text of this letter had been decided on at a sitting of the Council of the Order of the Grand Orient of France, and it carried at its head the formula .

A.'. L.'. G.'. D.'. G.'. A.'. D.'. L'U.'. (To the Glory of the Grand Architect of the Universe.)

The decision of the General Assembly of 1877 did not then suppress this symbol, as some have pretended, and there has been no other decisions on the matter since. On the report of a Protestant pastor it simply abrogated a dogmatic formula, with the purpose, as Brother Desmons states, of placing the Grand Orient of France « above all cults and all denominations of religions ».

Being inspired by the moderation and tolerance drawn from Anderson, the Order, remaining firmly attached to the moral Law does neither recommend nor prohibits any belief or private philosophic concept. The Grand Orient of France declares itself the champion of Liberty in all domains; it considers that this Liberty should be absolute in the realm of thought. It refuses to join farces with a dogmatism which enchains the spirit as much as with a dictatorship which suppresses individual liberty.

It asks no Masonic Power to change its forms of thought or to renounce its usages, or to modify its rite, or to abolish its beliefs : it simply wishes that it may have the same toleration in its regard. Besides it intends to show not only in its relations with Masonic Powers that it respects their beliefs and their rites, but that it permits in its own bosom, the practice of various rites and the use of their own peculiar symbolism.

In 1776, 1804, and 1862, the Grand Orient of France admitted several rites into its society. The Lodges of its correspondence can be authorized to practice them and even to work in conformity with the Rituals of another regular Masonic Power. American, Scandinavian, or English Masons, desiring to found a Lodge attached to the Grand Orient of France can use the rituals in use in the Grand Lodge of their origin. The Scottish Lodges forming part of the Grand Orient of France work with the regular ritual of their Rite, which allows them to use the symbolism of the Grand Architect of the Universe, and a Lodge composed of Yugoslavs has been authorized to work in the presence of the Bible, conforming to the ritual of the Grand Lodge of Yugoslavia. Finally, has not the Lodge The Harmony, at the Orient of Swansea in Great Britain, worked' from 1893 to 1924, during 32 years with the ritual of the United Grand Lodge of England, while belonging to the jurisdiction of the Grand Orient of France ?

The Charges of Anderson had removed Masonry from Catholic Theism, but we ought to recognize that they have preserved a certain religious character, quite comprehensible for the 18th century, as we have already remarked'. However, right or wrong, we deem that no one can stop the flight of thought; the same with the institutions of men, so the human mind fatally evolves and will continue to evolve. Sometimes it draws too hasty conclusions from the discoveries of Science; at other times it seems to attach itself to a past which appears out of date, but in spite of its oscillations, sometimes deceiving, let us give credit that it proceeds towards its complete liberation. If one can reproach the Grand Orient of France for not attaching itself to the letter of the Charges, should it not be recognized that it strives to penetrate into their broad spirit of toleration and their profound feeling of Brotherhood ? Do others think that in remaining attached to the letter of these Charges depriving them of all life, that they have remained more faithful to them than we have ?

In 1913, the Pro-Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England pronounced, at Berlin, the following word's : « Masonry has a great mission; the individual perfecting of the Mason or of the Lodge is ultimately a small thing compared' to the immense edifice which Masonry endeavors to construct. This edifice is nothing less than a most intimate union of all the Grand Lodges of true Freemasons, in order that Masonry may become a civilizing power to which nothing can be compared, and which will enable the nations to leave aside mistrust and misunderstandings. It is time that we should affirm that, which ought to be our ideal. We are all obliged to recognize this superior ideal which right-thinking Mass have placed before us; the

most intimate union of all the Masonic Fraternity. For two hundred years we have accumulated and cut the stones which ought to serve us for the construction of the edifice, it is now time to build. Let us build together. »

The Grand Orient of France approves fully this admirable Masonic page, with the sole reservation of what Lord Ampthill understood by « true Masons » or < right thinking Masons, and the manner of the most intimate union of all Grand Lodges that the United Grand Lodge of England proposes.

It is not the essentials that divide us, it is the form. We are in accord on the principles to defend and the aim to pursue, we differ only as to our methods, our modes of thought. Is it impossible for us to concede that there is no more a chosen jurisdiction than that there is a chosen People? It is not only among the nations, but also among the Masonic Powers that it is necessary to suppress K distrusts and misunderstandings » if one wishes that « Masonry may become a civilizing power to which nothing can be compared. »

Shall we wish, shall we be able, all of us, to realize that rapprochement can be attempted only if it is based on respect for the beliefs and concepts of the different Rites, on the understanding of the historical development of the different Masonic Powers, and on mutual esteem and toleration ?

It is in re-assembling all the stones that the diverse Masonic tendencies, too long separated, have << accumulated and cut », it is in harmonizing the efforts of all those who are sincerely and profoundly Masons, << men of good-will and true », that Universal Freemasonry will be able to accomplish its great mission », to build, to erect, the ideal Temple that will realize the union of the nations in Peace, by the Brotherhood of men.

***Presented to the International Masonic Association  
in the name of the  
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